

GUEVARA COMMENTS ON VARIOUS TOPICS

Havana Correspondent's Dispatch in English to the DAILY WORKER London
1540 GMT 29 November 1962--E (~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~)

(Text) Havana--In the only interview given by a Cuban leader since the Cuban crisis began over a month ago, Cuba's deputy premier and minister of industries, Commandant Che Guevara, on 28 November underlined the ever-present threat of American aggression against Cuba, despite American attempts to lull the world into a false sense of security. For over two hours--until well past midnight--I discussed the situation with him in his office on Havana's Revolution Square as he put Cuba's point of view with complete frankness and sincerity. The olive-green uniform which he, like all other Cuban leaders, still wears, the armed guards on the building and the men and women drilling in the streets as I came to his office also underlined the sense of imminente danger which every Cuban feels.

"The rockets have gone," he said, "and the Il-28 planes are going, but the Americans still want to come here. They have still not given any guarantee against aggression and make everything dependent on unilateral inspection, which we will not accept. What is more, the Americans reserve the right to be the sole arbiters as to when they should intervene openly; as well as the right to violate our airspace whenever they want."

Major Guevara said that the situation therefore is still serious, but what happens in the future depends on a number of circumstances. The U.S. is trying to estimate what it would cost to liquidate Cuba and what it would gain from liquidating Cuba, he said, and on the results of this estimation will depend the decision on whether they launch their attack. "If they attack, he continued, we shall fight to the end. If the rockets had remained, we would have used them all and directed them against the very heart of the United States, including New York, in our defense against aggression. But we haven't got them, so we shall fight with what we've got. In the face of an aggressor like the U.S., there can be no solution other than to fight to the death, inflicting the maximum damage on the enemy."

Major Guevara said he realizes that to some people this might sound highly emotional, but during the days of acute crisis the Cuban people appreciated that it was faced with the threat of atomic annihilation and that their determination to resist meant that they would die because they were in the front line.

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"Whether the Americans attack or not depends on their estimate of our internal situation and of the international situation. That is why the solidarity of the peoples of the world is of such importance to us. We are under no illusion. We know we cannot exist on our own. We depend on the solidarity of the socialist camp and of the whole world."

While not underestimating the importance of the solidarity movement that has developed in the world in support of Cuba, Major Guevara considered that the most effective form of help was the armed struggle already taking place in a number of Latin American countries where the peoples are in action to overthrow American imperialism. "We know," he continued, "that some people in Europe are saying that a great victory has been won. But we say that the danger is still here, and we say that while war may have been avoided, that does not mean that peace has been assured. And we ask whether in exchange for some slight gain we have only prolonged the agony. For so far, all that has happened is that a confrontation has been avoided."

I then asked Major Guevara what was the present state of relations between the Soviet Union and Cuba--especially in view of Premier Fidel Castro's statement of 1 November that certain misunderstandings or discrepancies had arisen. "During Comrade Mikoyan's visit," he said, "we went into a great number of questions with the Soviet Union. We discussed frankly and fully and each side put his point of view. We know that the Soviet Union is the friend that can help us most, and we are convinced that it will continue to help us. All we have done is to use our right as an independent party within the framework of the principles of international proletarian solidarity. The discrepancies are past and will not be of importance in the future. We consider ourselves part of the socialist world and absolutely faithful to Marxism-Leninist ideas."

My next question was on the effects of the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba and how Cuba has dealt with the situation. Major Guevara pointed out that while President Kennedy had announced the end of the so-called quarantine, the economic blockade continues and that President Kennedy himself has declared that political, economic and other measures against Cuba will be intensified.

He pointed out too that the blockade had been imposed in a number of stages. The first stage was when the U.S. closed its ports to Cuban goods and stopped the export of goods Cuba needed. Then the United States asked its allies not to trade with Cuba. "And now," he continued, "the United States is preparing to impose sanctions on those ships, merchants and manufacturers who are trading with Cuba. This will hit Britain most of all."

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"There could be further acts in this connection. But we can say that each time, we have found ways of overcoming the effects of this blockade policy."

Major Guevara said that it would be ridiculous to pretend that the blockade has not hit Cuba, for our factories and public services are equipped mostly with American and British machinery, which need spare parts for servicing. "But if we cannot get these spare parts," he added, "then we shall find other ways of overcoming our difficulties and we have achieved considerable success in this respect already."

"Of course, this will mean hardship for us, but today it is impossible to strangle a country economically. So we shall win out. Of course, it will mean that our development plans will have to be modified and be less ambitious."

On President Kennedy's threat to use, apart from political and economic pressure, "other measures" against Cuba, Major Guevara said that this covered the whole field of paramilitary action, including espionage, sabotage, the dropping of arms and agents by parachute along Cuba's long coastline--in fact, "everything short of open war, while reserving the right to resort to open attack. The violation of our airspace continues all the time, and we have not seen the end of this sort of thing by any means."

Major Guevara then gave me some interesting details about the way in which the Cuban people had strengthened their political organization in the past year in face of the growing American threat. The trade unions, the women's organization, the young communist league, and the mass organizations of the people in the defense committees which exist in every street and village have been drawn into the solution of a multitude of questions--including things like rationing, health measures, especially vaccination, immunizations of children--as well as ensuring round-the-clock vigilance to protect factories, fields, and homes against sabotage and espionage.

The past seven months, however, have been especially significant, for they have seen the beginning of the formation of the new United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS), following the removal of the former communist leader Anibal Escalante for sectarianism and his attempts to create an elite separated from the masses of the people.

At present the political organization of the Cuban people is the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI), which was formed from Premier Fidel Castro's 26 July movement, the old Popular Socialist Party, and the directorate, which was mainly a students' organization.

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The new party is being formed on the basis of mass meetings being held at all places of work. The workers are invited to choose model workers from among themselves. These are then invited to join the new party while the fitness for membership of the new party of members of the present organizations is also discussed at mass meetings. This process is continuing at the present time all over the country, although it has been held up somewhat by the mobilization measures necessitated by the crisis of the past month. When completed by the beginning of next year, it is hoped to have the first nucleus of some 50,000 to 60,000 members and to hold the first congress of the new party built on the basis of men and women chosen by the people themselves to be the vanguard of Cuba's socialist revolution.

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My final question to Major Guevara was on the contribution that the Cuban revolution has made to the development of Marxist thought and practice. His reply was typically modest, and he deliberately limited himself to the effects of the Cuban example in Latin America. "The Cuban revolution," he said, "has shown that in conditions of imperialist domination such as exist in Latin America, there is no solution but armed struggle--for the people to take power out of the hands of the Yankee imperialists and the small group of the national bourgeoisie who work with them." The question then was, he added, how this armed struggle could be most effectively carried through. While the bourgeoisie had their armed forces concentrated in the cities where they had the factory workers at their mercy. They were comparatively weak in the countryside, where the peasants are living mostly in a state of feudal oppression and are also very revolutionary.

"Cuba has shown," he continued, "that small guerrilla groups, well-led and located in key points, with strong links with the masses of the people, can act as a catalyst of the masses bringing them into mass struggle through action. "Such action, to be convincing, must be effective, and guerrilla action has shown how armed forces can be beaten and how guerrillas can be converted into an army which eventually can destroy the armed forces of the class enemy.

"We say," Major Guevara continued, "that this can be done in a large number of Latin American countries. But this is not to say that Cuba's example is to be followed mechanically, but rather adapted to the specific conditions in each of Latin America's 20 countries." He pointed out that in Venezuela, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Colombia, guerrillas are already active in armed struggle against the American imperialists and their henchmen, while there have been clashes in Nicaragua and Peru, and none of this had any physical connection with Cuba,

"There is no other solution possible in these countries except armed struggle. The objective conditions for this exist, and Cuba's example has shown these countries the way."

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